



## Economic Benefits of Transportation Investment

Access to and within the National Park System has been a defining experience for generations of visitors.

The National Park Service (NPS) coordinates the planning and implementation of transportation systems that improve the visitor experience and care for national parks by:

- Preserving natural and cultural resources.
- Enhancing visitor safety and security.
- Protecting plant and animal species.
- Reducing congestion.
- Decreasing pollution.

NPS is committed to being a leader in pursuing strategies that can help make park units more enjoyable, cleaner, quieter, and more sustainable for present and future generations.

For more information, visit [nps.gov/transportation](http://nps.gov/transportation)

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**EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA**

*National Parks attract nearly 300 million annual visitors who spend billions of dollars and support thousands of jobs in neighboring communities. Transportation systems support this relationship by connecting visitors and employees to parks and nearby towns. Transportation investments are required to maintain access and enable ongoing economic exchange.*

### Transportation in the National Parks

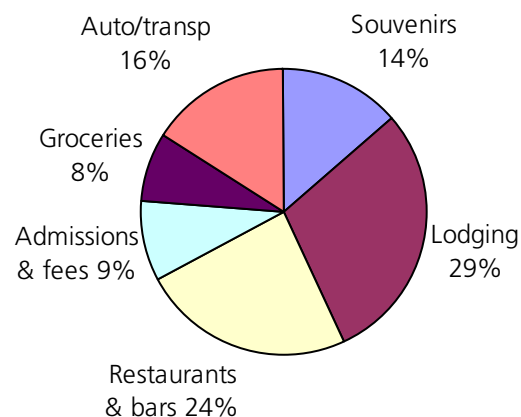
The roads, parking lots, buses, trams, ferries, bikeways, walking trails, and other components of transportation systems in the National Parks are essential to their vitality. High capacity parking lots and shuttle buses support high rates of visitation at destination parks like Grand Canyon and Yosemite. Shuttle bus service and walking facilities in parks like Acadia open access to urban and foreign visitors without automobile access. Transportation assets can also be key attractions, such as Cuyahoga Valley's bikeways and Glacier Park's Going-to-the-Sun Road.

### Impacts of Park Transportation

For every dollar invested in National Parks, an estimated 4 dollars in economic activity is generated.<sup>1</sup> Transportation is one area of investment that has both direct and indirect impacts on the economy.

- Visitors depend on Park transportation systems to access local shops, restaurants, lodging establishments, and other tourist attractions. During their visits in 2007, visitor spending amounted to \$11.8 billion and supported some 232,000 related jobs in and around National Parks.<sup>2</sup>
- Employees use park roads and buses to access jobs and carry out daily tasks. In FY 2007, the NPS employed 23,853 people, with a total payroll of \$1,142 million in wages and salaries and \$300 million in payroll benefits.<sup>2</sup>
- Rehabilitation projects provide design and construction work.
- Transit services employ vehicle operators and maintenance staff.

Visitor Spending Distribution<sup>2</sup>



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### Who makes transportation investments in National Parks?

Through the Public Lands Highway Discretionary Fund, Park Roads and Parkways Program and other earmarks the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) invests approximately \$250 million annually into transportation in National Parks, about \$5-\$10 million of which goes into alternative transportation projects such as shuttle buses. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) invests in National Parks through the Alternative Transportation in Parks Program. The National Park Service itself invests in cyclic maintenance projects and is generally supported by parking fees and park entrance fees.



Workers making repairs to Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park, Montana

#### Glacier National Park

Going-to-the-Sun Road carries visitors to unparalleled vistas and is the only road that crosses Glacier National Park. Logan Pass, the most frequently visited destination along the route, is visited by 76% of Glacier National Park's 2.1 million annual visitors.<sup>3</sup> Frequent extreme weather conditions lead NPS to predict that the road will fail within the next 50 years without proper intervention. Visitor surveys indicate that a segment of park visitors would shorten or even cancel their stay at Glacier National Park if access to this important road were limited or cut off.<sup>3</sup> With the help of the Federal Highway Administration NPS is currently making needed preventative repairs to avoid road failure.

#### Acadia National Park

Heavy private vehicle traffic in Acadia National Park degrades visitor experience and overwhelms local parking lots. The addition of the Island Explorer bus service to the park was made possible in part through NPS transportation investments. The buses have helped local businesses to expand service capacity and profits by reducing competition for limited parking spaces.<sup>4</sup> Island Explorer buses have also been shown to attract new visitor demographics such as foreign visitors that might be uncomfortable with operating private automobiles.<sup>4</sup>

In 2007, Acadia National Park generated \$145 million in visitor spending and supported more than 2,800 jobs.<sup>2</sup>



Island Explorer buses keep as many as 88,000 motor vehicles off park roads during the peak summer months.



Denali Shuttle Buses in Alaska

#### Denali National Park

The narrow roads in Denali National Park in Alaska can quickly become overwhelmed by private vehicle traffic. Road widening is not possible without significant environmental impact. As a result, automobile traffic was restricted through most of the park. A shuttle bus service was implemented to retain visitor access even though car traffic was limited. Shuttle bus trips now account for nearly 80% of all trips made in the park. An unexpected benefit of decreasing the volume of traffic on the roads was an increased frequency of wildlife sightings by visitors.<sup>4</sup>

1. Hardner, Jared & McKenney, Bruce. "The US National Park System: An Economic Asset at Risk." Hardner & Gullison, 30 May 2006.

2. Stynes, Daniel. "National Park Visitor Spending and Payroll Impacts." University of Michigan, September 2008.

3. "Going-to-the-Sun Road Rehab Plan/ Environmental Assessment." NPS & FHWA, April 2003.

4. Dunning, Anne. "Economic Impacts on Gateway Communities Resulting from the Introduction of Transit in Parks." Georgia Institute of Technology, July 2004.

